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The Truth About the Vietnamese War in A Dead U.S. Soldier's Pathetic Last Letter Home

"The day before he was killed, Army Sgt.1C Harold E. Strong wrote to his wife in nearby Fairfax County that he was glad to be 'getting out' of Vietnam in April. . . . He also wrote, a friend of the family said, that 'we just don't know what we're doing here.' The letter added, 'these people' (the Vietnamese) 'don't even want us here'."

—"Wife Tells of Letter From Viet Cong Victim" in the Washington Evening Star, January 29.

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The Day the CIA's Crystal Ball Cracked Wide Open

Washington, Jan. 26 (UPI)—Sen. J. Wm. Fulbright, D. Ark., said today after a briefing by Central Intelligence Director McCone that there did not appear to be any immediate danger of the South Vietnam government being overthrown.

This item deserves preservation. It came off the United Press-International ticker the afternoon of Tuesday, Jan. 26. Few newspapers published it next day though by 8:30 p.m. that night Washington was officially informed that the South Vietnamese government had again been overthrown. When I was a boy the favorite sport of enterprising newspapers was to catch public officials with their pants down. The new game laws seem to protect CIA Chiefs. Nobody seemed to feel that it was news that our foremost intelligence official had been proven wrong within a few hours of the private briefing he had given the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that day on the situation in Vietnam. Mr. McCone is a hard-driving business man. If a subordinate had so misinformed him on an important business deal, that subordinate would almost certainly been looking for another job.

Coup Already Planned and Announced

The flaccidity of the press is matched by that of the Senators. There was a time when one would have expected the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to recall Mr. McCone and ask him how he came to be so badly informed. There is evidence that the new coup was already in the works at the very time he spoke. For the *New York Herald-Tribune* reported from Saigon Jan. 28, "Reliable sources said Gen. Khanh and the powerful Armed Forces Council which he heads had originally planned the coup for next Tuesday [i.e. Feb. 2] but moved up the date after General Taylor decided on a 24-hour trip to Thailand and Laos yesterday [Jan. 26]." Indeed one of the Generals seems to have publicly indicated that the coup was coming hours before McCone briefed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. For in Paris *Le Monde*, which covers Southeast Asia better than any other paper in the world, reported Jan. 28 that Tuesday afternoon, before flying off to Saigon, Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi, commander of the first region, told students demonstrating against the government in Hué that a change of regime might well occur next day. The time difference between South Vietnam and Washington is 13 hours. When it's 3 p.m. in South Vietnam, it's only 2 a.m. in Washington. Mr. McCone appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at 10 a.m. Washington time. By then it was 11 p.m. in South Vietnam. But no agent had caught or sent this bit of news

(Continued On Page Two)

Auguries For Peace?

We note some auguries for peace in Vietnam. Joseph Alsop is despondent. On Jan. 27 he complained that the President on three separate occasions had overruled recommendations from Gen. Taylor for strikes at North Vietnam. On Jan. 29 Alsop reported that the "domino theory" was now being treated scornfully at the White House. "The President has evidently persuaded himself, or at least three-quarters persuaded himself," Alsop wrote indignantly, "that a great defeat in South Vietnam need not have the grave consequences outside Vietnam predicted by the 'Domino Theorists'." The tone indicated that Alsop's patience was wearing thin, and that any day now he might stage a guerrilla uprising of his own.

On the afternoon of that same day, as if to confirm Alsop's suspicions, the Washington Star appeared with a headline, "Saigon Coup May Be Beneficial" over a column by Joseph Kraft, who also has sources in the White House. The coup, Kraft speculated, "far from being an undoubted setback," could be "a step toward the least bad of all possible settlements." This would be one that was "negotiated between the Saigon government and the Vietnamese Communists, with the U.S. edged obscurely into the background, and the Chinese Communists excluded altogether." This was preferable, Kraft wrote, to a "Geneva type" negotiation with Peking in which the U.S. might come off second-best with "disastrous impact . . . on domestic politics."

Mr. Kraft admitted that "Khanh's new regime has not yet fixed its direction." He could break with the Buddhists and "establish a military dictatorship." But it is possible, Mr. Kraft continued hopefully, "that Khanh will stick with the Buddhists, and initiate local negotiations." It sounded as if someone in the government were trying desperately to send Khanh a message, in a plain unmarked envelope.

Two days later, in the Sunday New York Times (Jan. 31), Seymour Topping reported from Saigon that "if a relatively representative government" asked the U.S. to leave, "officials here feel that there would be no choice but to go." He added that contingency plans were ready "to deal with a situation in which Americans might have to leave South Vietnam hastily." U.S. Marines would be airlifted from Okinawa "to screen the withdrawal of Americans." The only thing missing was an offer to supply "Americans Go Home" signs free of charge, with demonstrators paid by the CIA to wave them as we left.

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Like the Bay of Pigs, Another Warning of Incompetent Intelligence

(Continued From Page One)

to Washington. Could it be there were no American agents around to observe that student demonstration, no informers among them?

$4 Billion A Year on Intelligence

The U.S. spends a fortune on intelligence. David Wise and Thomas B. Ross in their recent book, "The Invisible Government" (Random House) report that Mr. McCone told a private briefing for high ranking military men in the summer of 1963 that U.S. intelligence had 100,000 persons involved in its work and spent $2 billion a year. That is three-quarters of a billion dollars more than the new and quadrupled poverty program. But Wise and Ross point out that this included only conventional forms of intelligence and not the electronic world-wide eavesdropping and aerial reconnaissance operations of the National Security Agency. They figure the total bill at $4 billions. A substantial portion of our intelligence network must be in Vietnam as a crucial war zone. There must be a swarm of U.S. agents and native informers assigned there by CIA and by the Pentagon's DIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency which tries to coordinate the separate, often exasperatingly conflicting intelligence services of Army, Navy and Air Force. Electronic monitoring by NSA must go on all the time from those ships and planes which constantly patrol the shores and skies of both North and South Vietnam. The Vietnamese Armed Forces depend for their payrolls on the United States. Its government would collapse overnight without U.S. support. Yet a new coup can be plotted in opposition to U.S. wishes without our far-flung civilian, military and electronic spy apparatus hearing about it until too late.

The coup was a blow to Gen. Taylor's prestige. No sooner did he leave town than the Huong regime he supported was thrown out and Gen. Khanh, whom Taylor hates, put back into power. Obviously military intelligence was pretty poor. Gen. Taylor wouldn't have left for Laos and Bangkok if he had suspected that this was brewing. The coup must also have hurt Mr. McCone's reputation as an intelligence chieftain with the Senators who heard him that morning. Here he was telling the Foreign Relations Committee in a private briefing that there was no immediate danger of an overthrow just when a change had already been plotted and indeed publicly forecast by one of the Generals. It would hurt Mr. McCone's reputation even more if the newspapers had done their duty and focused public attention on the incident. For he is not only head of CIA but chairman of the U.S. Intelligence Board which coordinates the activities of the government's twelve separate intelligence agencies. As after the Bay of Pigs affair, another glimpse of incompetence on the part of our intelligence, it is time to stop and consider this deeply. It is on such misinformation that American prestige, treasure and lives depend in Vietnam.

North Vietnam's Attitude Toward Peace

A dispatch from Moscow in The Worker (Jan. 31) merits wider attention. Its correspondent interviewed British Laborite MP William Warbey when he passed through the Soviet capital on his way back from North Vietnam. Warbey found Ho Chi Minh still vigorous and well-informed at 74. Warbey said he would report to the Foreign Office on his talks with Ho and with his Premier, Pham Van Dong. According to Art Shields, the Worker correspondent, Warbey reported that the Premier "said his government had no wish to hurry the question of unification" and added, "the people of South Vietnam have autonomy and will establish their own government and carry out their own policies in their own way. The North Vietnamese government, of course," this account continued, "wants to restore economic ties with the South. But it will not pressure South Vietnam to join its planned economy, and the way is open for friendship with the United States after the end of the intervention." This indicates that North Vietnamese policy is still the same as that reported by Dr. Bernard Fall and two other Western correspondents after interviews with Ho and Pham Van Dong in 1962 (see Fall's The Two Vietnams, p. 199), i.e. the acceptance of an independent neutral South in return for resumption of trade and peace between North and South. This provides a favorable atmosphere for Moscow's newly announced mission to Hanoi if (as Washington plainly hopes) it explores the possibilities of peace.

The War's No End of Fun in Saigon, But Not So Jolly in The Villages

"The U.S. military 'advisory' morale remains high, if chiefly because most 'advisers' know that, provided they survive, they will have gained battle experience and service promotion. Approximately 25% of the officers of the American Army's 16 divisions are already engaged in the South Vietnam war.

"With the growing influx of Americans, gracious, tree-lined Saigon at night is reminiscent of Tokyo under U.S. occupation. Crew-cut Americans in civilian clothes, with all the advantages of PX comforts, parade and dine their Vietnamese beauties, who are learning to chew gum, to pet in public and to wear skin-tight slacks.

"There has been a great expansion of bars and cabarets offering striptease. . . . Food and service have sharply deteriorated and prices are soaring. Every night the exhaust roar of crowded taxis and latest model limousines, racing the 1 a.m. curfew, drowns the distant rumble of mortar fire on the outskirts of the city.

"An average full-time investment in a 'good-family' concubine runs to about £25 a month. Any enterprising dance hostess can earn ten times the salary of a Government secretary. A cynical Saigon jest is 'the Vietcong occupy our countryside and seduce the peasants; the Americans occupy our cities and seduce our girls'."

—Richard Hughes, Saigon, to London Sunday Times *Jan. 24.*

"As an aide shrilly called off names, Major Ly handed each old man and woman a packet of freshly green printed piastre notes. Those who had lost a son or daughter, father or wife, were given the equivalent of $40; a lost cow or razed home brought half that amount. The villagers were very grave and formal and did not speak nor count their money nor acknowledge its receipt. It was like an ancient, unquestioned ritual solemnly undergone as a memorial to the dead. Yet almost every old face registered hate."

—Richard Critchfield from Nghia Hanh Village, South Vietnam, to the Washington Star, *Jan. 27, describing the payment of reparations five months late "for the deaths and damage inflicted by the government's troops."*

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Public Hearings Begin on Enforcement of New Anti-Discrimination Weapon

Civil Rights Commission Panelists on Title VI Termed Too Lily-White

Civil rights and anti-poverty workers had a rare opportunity last week to confront federal bureaucrats en masse with their protests. This at least was the result if not the intention of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission's national conference on the Civil Rights Act. Agency officials were called on to explain how they will administer Title VI, which says that all federal funds must be withdrawn from state and local programs that practice discrimination. This can be a powerful $15 billion a year weapon against segregation.

At the two sessions we attended the audience showed itself in no mood for compromise. Aaron Henry, president of the Mississippi state NAACP, hit the most exposed nerve. "There are no Negro panelists helping direct this program," he declared to a panel on elementary and secondary education. "Why do you expect us to do more down South than you do in Washington?" When Hyman Bookbinder, the special assistant to Sargent Shriver in the poverty program, retorted that this wasn't a "useful" comment, Clarence Mitchell from the Washington Bureau of the NAACP quipped that it wouldn't be very helpful in Mississippi "if the *Jackson Daily News* came up here and took a picture."

14 Negroes 'Elected' in Miss.

The Agriculture Department has one of the toughest and most important jobs under Title VI. Its services in the rural South have always been administered locally by white men only. Assistant Secretary John Baker announced that special precautions last December resulted in the election of 14 Mississippi Negro farmers to a few of the county committees that administer the farm subsidy program. This was a remarkable first, but it was just a token victory compared to what a fair election would have produced. A young member of the National Lawyers Guild produced a briefcase full of affidavits from Negro farmers telling how they had been deprived of their votes. Many weren't informed of the election; others were directed to the wrong polls, and because the polls were in private stores, several civil rights workers who tried to assist them were arrested for trespassing. The Department had asked the FBI to guard the polls but the agency deferred to the local police.

The executive secretary of the National Sharecropper's Fund told the same panel that integration of the extension service in South Carolina was being used to downgrade the once independent Negro staff members. She said the Department would never find out the truth about its programs unless "someone from the Federal office and not tied to local influence is sent out to talk to the Negro agents away from the whites." The NAACP field director in South Carolina wanted to know why the few Negroes who are appointed to agricultural committees from Washington "in most instances owe allegiance for their jobs to the local power structure and cannot speak for the Negro community." These complaints were themselves indications of progress, but progress so slow that it embitters. The Department, for example, has failed to make any Negro appointments from the list of names that it asked civil rights workers to submit. The list took weeks to compile, and the Negro farmers who agreed to be part of it —some of them even from Neshoba county—did so at great personal risk.

Testimony from a young idealist at the Office of Economic Opportunity shows what can be done. The Office has refused to approve a Community Action Program in Cleveland because its board is not representative of the community; one of the two Negroes chosen for the 22 member board was most widely known for his refusal to take part in civil rights activity. A quarter-million dollar grant to Louisiana has also been held up because the administrator there is an ardent segregationist. In Atlanta, Georgia, a Negro woman active in voter registration has been given the job of neighborhood coordinator for the poverty program. These few isolated actions show what militant administration could do.

The Price Of That Tax Cut

"Sen. CLARK: I congratulate President Johnson on the budget which he sent to Congress yesterday—a budget which calls for a $5.3 billion deficit. In view of the prevailing attitude in Congress toward Federal expenditures, I recognize the political necessity which required him to hold his budget below $100 billion; but I deplore it. . . .

"Sen. GORE: . . . Had Congress not passed the tax reduction bill last year, we would now have a surplus instead of a deficit. . . . Now that we have closed our eyes to the real needs of our people and reduced Government revenue by more than $11 billion, we discover that we have something called poverty, against which we must wage war. We discover that our health facilities are inadequate; that our education is woefully inadequate; that our streams are polluted; our trains too slow; and that America is badly in need of beautification. But now we do not have the money to meet those problems because we gave away the revenue in an unwise, unjustified, political tax cut."

—In the Senate, Jan. 26.

Supreme Court Justices Startled by U.S. Position in Mississippi Voting Rights Case

No less than five Supreme Court justices expressed amazement last week at the government's argument in U.S. v. Mississippi. The case involves the constitutionality of Mississippi's voting laws, under which only 5% of voting-age Negroes in the state have been able to register. A finding of unconstitutionality would eliminate the need to prove county by county that the laws are being unfairly applied. This has been a painfully slow approach. Justices Harlan, Stewart, White, Black and Goldberg indicated readiness to rule on the question of constitutionality. Mr. Justice Harlan said the government's brief as he read it seemed to ask that "the laws be declared unconstitutional on their face by this court," but Mr. Archibald Cox, the Solicitor General, replied that he was not "pressing" for immediate relief. He asked only that the Court remand the case to a three-judge U.S. District Court for trial.

The reason for Mr. Cox's strategy was not made clear. Perhaps he feared defeat, but remanding the case means a two year delay. The three-judge court, with its two Mississippi justices, will almost certainly rule against the government, as it did in the original suit, and this will make necessary a second appeal to the Supreme Court.

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Un-American Committee Faces Two Separate Attacks In The House

Attorney General Asked to Suspend HUAC Contempt Citations

Congressman Phillip Burton (*D., Cal.*) took the first action in Congress last week to overturn the Un-American Activities Committee's contempt citation against two leaders of Women Strike for Peace and the manager of the *National Guardian*. Dagmar Wilson, Donna Allen and Russell Nixon were cited last December when they refused to testify in an executive session of the committee. In a letter February 1 to Attorney General Katzenbach, Burton noted that he has introduced retroactive legislation which requires House approval for any contempt citation. In the current case, the Speaker of the House certified the contempt citation when Congress was not in session. In his letter, Burton asked the Attorney General for a stay in the contempt proceedings until Congress has acted on his bill.

To Avoid Another Surprise

More than a dozen liberal congressmen are currently planning two broader attacks on HUAC's powers. The first, which should occur in mid-February, seeks to reduce HUAC's funds. This is tricky because committee appropriations are privileged motions: they by-pass the Rules Committee and come directly to the floor from the Committee on House Administration. This happened so swiftly last year that every liberal but one was caught off the floor. To guard against a similar surprise move this year, Rep. Don Edwards (*D., Cal.*) has asked to testify on the HUAC appropriation. Liberals would then know approximately when it was coming to the floor. This year they will also have an ally inside the Administration Committee in freshman Rep. Jonathan Bingham (*D., N.Y.*). In the past this has been one of the most conservative committees in Congress. Nine of its fifteen Democrats are Southerners.

A further complication is that many liberals who are anti-HUAC are reluctant to use committee appropriations as a weapon against it. They fear that the precedent, once established, could be used against them easier than against the conservatives. In fact, it already has been. Last year the Administration Committee severely cut the appropriation for Rep. Adam Clayton Powell's Education and Labor Committee. Powell had to turn out anti-poverty, education and fair labor standards legislation with less money for his 30 staff members than HUAC received for its nine.

The second attack on HUAC seeks abolition. Here there are two approaches. One group of congressmen, including Burton, Edwards, Resnick and Hawkins from California, Rosenthal and Farbstein from New York, and Diggs from Michigan, all Democrats, has introduced resolutions to abolish HUAC and give Judiciary authority to investigate sabotage and "overt acts affecting internal security." All HUAC's records would be transferred to the National Archives "not to be opened for official or public inspection." A smaller group of congressmen, so far including only Roosevelt (*D., Cal.*) and Lindsay (*R., N.Y.*) has embarked on a bit of flim-flam. Their bills would "abolish" HUAC but only by transferring its existing authority to an Un-American Activities subcommittee of House Judiciary. This would merely shift the evil, not eradicate it.

FBI'S Right To Harass?

After two weeks of 24-hour a day surveillance by Chicago FBI agents, Mr. Sam Giancana sued for an injunction against the head of the Chicago FBI, Mr. Marlin Johnson. With only Mr. Justice Douglas dissenting, the Supreme Court last week refused without explanation to hear the case. The FBI agents, lacking a warrant, had followed Giancana on some 15 or 16 occasions to his golf club, had informed his partners and the club's manager that they were "federal agents," and had pursued Giancana even into the mausoleum where the remains of his wife were interred. The 3 to 5 FBI cars stationed within 10 yards of his home were equipped with telescopic lens cameras for photographing its interior. A U.S. District Court granted Giancana a temporary injunction and found FBI chief Johnson guilty of contempt for refusing to answer any questions concerning the surveillance. A U.S. Court of Appeals confirmed the contempt conviction but vacated the injunction on the ground that a district court has no jurisdiction in suits involving less than $10,000. Giancana had failed to place a dollar value on the damage done to him.

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